**Standards and Assessment Review Group**

**Work Group Notes from Kick-off Meeting (May 2012)**

A small cross-sector group (2- and 4-year faculty and K-12 educators; 22 in math, 20 in ELA) convened initially in May, 2012 for a one-day discussion with disciplinary peers about the CCSS and the *Core to College* project. The focus of the meeting was on beginning to build faculty ownership and understanding of the CCSS as meaningful and useful college-readiness standards through a detailed comparison of the existing Washington college readiness standards in math and English Language Arts and the CCSS (see agenda outcomes below). This Review Group will re-convene in October 2012 and again in 2013 and 2014 to examine the Smarter Balanced assessment in detail as it becomes available in order to assess its relevance as a college-readiness assessment for Washington higher education.

May 21, 2012 Meeting Outcomes

1. Build working relationship within Review Group
2. Gain a better understanding of CCSS by developing a structured comparison with existing WA college readiness standards in math and English
3. Refine plans for ongoing Review Group work during C2C project (2012-2014), including understanding of and involvement with Smarter Balanced assessment

***MATH WORK GROUP NOTES***

The math group was divided into cross sector teams, each of which looked in depth at one Conceptual Category (e.g. Geometry), looking at the big ideas of the category as well as the particular learning targets in that area. Each team had access to the Common Core Standards and the Washington State Performance Expectations to provide background about existing expectations and changes in content, complexity and demonstration of deep understanding.

Reactions to Standards

* Overall, participants liked the Standards for Mathematical Practice very much. They agreed that if students had these habits of mind upon entering a post-secondary institution, they would certainly be college ready.
* Every group found the Common Core State Standards in Math acceptable entry level to college credit bearing courses at some extent. There was general agreement that teaching the algebra and function strands well was the most important factor for success in college mathematics.
* Many participants thought that the geometry standards were too involved and partially unnecessary for entrance into a college credit bearing mathematics course while others felt that student heading into a STEM field would need those geometric understandings to enter into calculus.
* The probability and statistics group felt strongly that, in particular, the statistics standards are necessary for all citizens to participate in business, government and communication but not necessary for entrance into a college credit bearing course.

Connections to Higher Education Practice

* There was some discussion of teaching these standards in the developmental math education program in the two-year institutions.
* The conversations around the Standards for Mathematical Practice were general in nature with little discussion of way that the practices would be taught, sustained or employed on the post-secondary classroom.
* There was some discussion reflecting on the changes that would be necessary in credit bearing college level courses or developmental courses when the standards are fully implemented.
* Many groups indicated a willingness to consider an assessment of the CCSS as an indicator of readiness for college credit bearing courses though most stated it would be one of several indicators considered.

Areas of Disagreement

* In the Functions Conceptual Category, there was widespread and persistent disagreement as to the inclusion of teaching transformation of graphs (required by the CCSS) and the teaching of function inverses (a (+) standard in CCSS.) The study of logarithms as an inverse function and also the of the study laws of logarithms caused deep discussion. Many viewpoints surfaced that indicated a wide disparity in expectations around the importance of logarithms.

Areas that Need Further Explanation and Focus

* Participants questioned the order of the topics in geometry without looking at the course recommendations. This suggests a misunderstanding that the topics are sequential and not progressions.
* There appeared to be good understanding about the content topics but less understanding about the cognitive complexity of the standards. Only one group referenced the necessity for modeling within their Conceptual Category.
* No groups referenced the Illustrative Math site nor looked at the test and item specs on the CCSS site to deepen their understanding of the standards.
* Most participants looked at the College Readiness Standards as a comparison document but only one looked at the Washington State PEs (performance expectations).
* Only one group looked at the 8th grade standards to see what would be taught at an earlier grade which would increase the understanding of the expectation at the high school level.
* No group commented on the use and implications of language in the standards. (e.g. “*Explain why the x-coordinates of the points where the graphs of the equations y = f(x) and y = g(x) intersect are the solutions of the equation f(x) = g(x).”* is the 10th grade standard. It implies a different cognitive demand from “*Solve systems of two linear equations in two variables algebraically, and estimate solutions by graphing the equations*,” the 8th grade standard.)
* Some of the post-secondary participants suggested the K-12 educators didn’t need to address all of the CCSS topics because they are addressed at the college level, which may indicate a lack of understanding about the requirement of teaching all the standards to secondary students.
* Looking for a good instrument (or set of data points) for placement.
* Would like to see Green River CC Project TIME senior-year course.
* We need professional development and calibration common to secondary and postsecondary institutions.
* There are lots of stakeholders who need to be included in this conversation.
* We need better, scaled up communication around transcripts.
* Need to keep in mind that there are many groups of students with diverse backgrounds and needs in the community college setting

Lingering Questions:

**Standards**

* What about the ABE and Basic Skills federal standards compared to the CCSS?
* How do progressions in CCSS work?
* What are the college readiness traits we need beyond the content standards?
* Are minimum high school graduation requirements congruent to college entrance expectations? To what extent do they match?

**Smarter Balanced assessment**

* How will scores from Smarter Balanced assessment be communicated?
* How will we be able to track student progress over time and across sectors?
* How do CCSS and Smarter Balanced assessments align to college success metrics? (e.g., SAI)
* How will we get access to Smarter Balanced pilots?
* What student population could be used in a pilot to learn about CCSS in the short run?
* How do transcripts convey information that is different from/supportive of Smarter Balanced Assessment?

**Implications for Practice in Washington**

* How are the 4-year institutions being involved in this process at a policy and institutional level? (e.g. core admission requirements, placement testing, etc.)
* How do we establish/sustain long term K-20 partnerships around common goals?
* How does the overall postsecondary system support this work?
* To what extent can CCSS and Smarter Balanced help with college readiness assessment and placement and what tools will be available?
* How do we increase large scale buy-in? How can we help the larger community?
* How can we improve students’ understanding of what it means to be college ready?
* How do we balance statewide coherence with the need for local control?

***ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS (ELA) WORK GROUP NOTES***

The ELA group began by reviewing together the CCSS description of “capacities for a literate individual” as the section most comparable to the Washington description of “attributes.” The group then divided into cross sector subgroups, each of which looked in depth at one major strand of the standards (reading, writing, speaking/listening, language), looking at the big ideas of the category as well as the particular learning targets in that area. The teams then re-arranged to share their respective discussions and provide additional perspectives on each of the areas from a different set of participants. The group wrapped up with a general discussion of the major “shifts in focus” reflected in the CCSS and their implications for higher education practice.

General Reactions to the CCSS Document and Description of Standards

* The group generally agreed that an initial review suggests that the CCSS standards reflect college readiness and appreciated the shifts involved (text complexity, mix of texts, etc.).
* While there are wording differences and few of the items are directly parallel, there’s a reasonable overlap between the Washington College Readiness Standards Attributes (see below) and the CCSS description of “capacities of the literate individual.” The attributes are the characteristics that allow for success, a little more about who the student is going to be; the “capacities” seem to be more about what the student knows and is able to do.
* The language of the standards suggests that they are not meant “to influence instruction” but focusing on text complexity and changing the mix of text types does change what can happen in the classroom.
* We need to explore the material in the appendices more fully in order to understand the kinds of texts referenced in the standards and fully appreciate what CCSS means by “text complexity.”
* The definition of distinct strands (reading, writing, etc.) seems to reinforce the “silo” effect and limit the possibility of integrating the strands effectively—difficult to address these strands in isolation.
* Metacognitive skills seem to be missing in the CCSS reading standards (knowing what you know and what you don’t know and need to know…).
* There is a lack of clarity about the connections between, and relative emphasis on, “college-ready” and “career-ready” in the descriptions of the standards, particularly in the area of language.
* The CCSS standards don’t seem to address effectively issues around student specific needs and accommodations.

Areas that Need Further Explanation and Focus

* Are “college-“ and “career-“ ready really the same, and if not, what are the meaningful differences between them?
* Is the technology focus reasonable given the challenges around equity of access to the tools referenced?
* How is the idea of complex texts being communicated to other subject matter areas?
* There is a strong paradigm shift embedded in the CCSS. How, when, and by whom will the professional development piece required happen?
* How does focusing on the CCSS standards allow for differentiations based on what individual students need?
* Is it reasonable to expect that all students will achieve these standards by the end of high school?
* How will teachers be able to address opportunities for extended speaking given current class sizes?
* How will these standards be assessed?
* Standards in language seem to reflect an over-emphasis on conventions rather than strategies for conventions, which is a big issue for many college faculty. Some in group wondered whether this emphasis reflected the distinction between “college-ready” and “career-ready”…?
* There were concerns raised that these expectations, especially with respect to language, could be used as an inappropriate gatekeeper for higher education entry.
* Given that the standards and assessments are so closely linked, I feel we need to open ourselves to revisiting assessment assumptions. We can assess far more than we allow so far, including some of those “fuzzy” items like metacognition and students’ contextual understanding of a concept.

Additional Questions

* Does the [Degree Qualifications Profile](http://degreeprofile.org/) work have any connection to the CCSS initiative at the moment? Should it?
* Can we see some examples of kinds of current CCSS-related PD already being offered in K-12? (e.g., Gwen in Bremerton, looking at a close reading as a strategy for working on language conventions)
* How does the CCSS value the rich oral tradition present in in some cultures? (There is some language about including “mix of conversations” but at the same time it appears that there are some reductionist pressures at play in the definitions or examples presented.)
* What accommodations has the CCSS made for ELL and special education students in order to address issues of equity and access?
* Can the major strands in ELA be linked so that teachers and students can recognize commonalities rather than maintaining distinct silos?
* What about including more reading teachers given the focus on broader notion of ELA?
* Is there a way to involve business people in the conversations who might be able to speak more directly to the “career” aspects of “college- and career-readiness”…?

Overall

Many of the limitations of the understanding of the CCSS occurred because it was a first experience with these standards for many of the participants and the time was relatively limited. Many of the post-secondary participants were enthusiastic about learning more about the CCSS and indicated that they were anxious to share what they learned with their colleagues. Many felt that implementation of the CCSS would positively impact students in the post-secondary environment but few commented on the subsequent changes that would happen in their courses. Further opportunity to explore the standards and to experience the specific content problem examples associated with the standards would be a good use of time to increase understanding.